

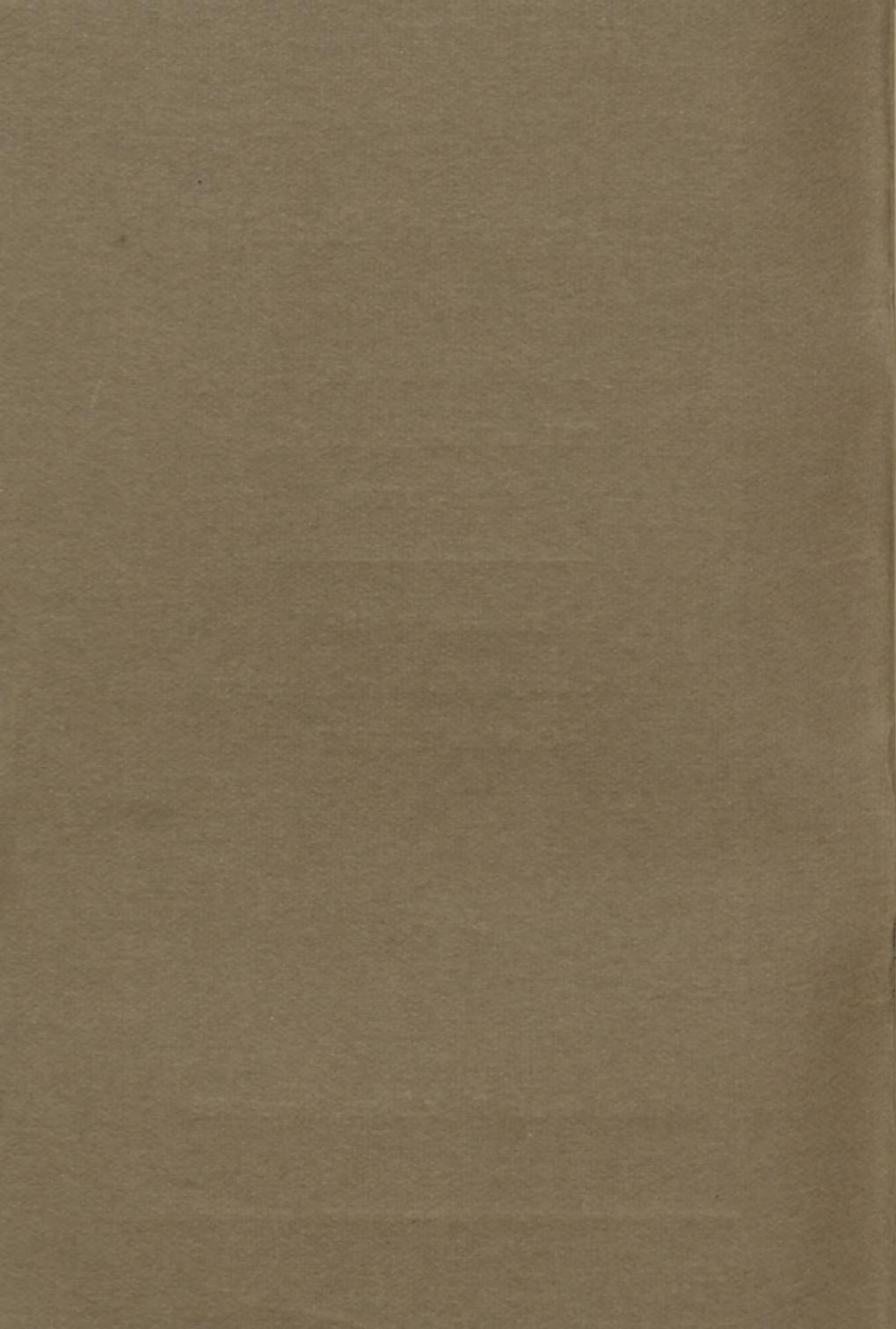
Biographical Sketch
Of
Sergt. James MacMurphy
Of Londonderry, N. H.

1733 - 1792

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A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

of James MacMurphy who was born in the town of Londonderry, N. H., served as sergeant in a company of militia, raised by the colony to defend the early settlement from the attacks of hostile Indians, married and raised a large family of children here, and died here in the enjoyment of peaceful and permanent possessions which are still in the family name.

Birth and Childhood.

James MacMurphy was the youngest of six children, five of whom were boys. The two oldest boys were named George and John, they were the children of Alexander MacMurphy, a charter proprietor of the town, and his first wife, Jean Liggett. This wife died January 18, 1724, and Alexander MacMurphy was again married. Jenet MacMurphy, the second wife, was the mother of four children: Jean, Alexander, Jr., Daniel and James, the subject of this sketch.

James MacMurphy was born July 23, 1733, on the homestead, laid out between the farms of Lieut. Governor Wentworth and Squire John MacMurphy, the latter being a brother of Alexander MacMurphy, Sr. These six children were very young when deprived of their father. In the first book of town records we read: that Alexander MacMurphy was drowned at Powow River in Kingstown, upon Tuesday the 19th of February 1734, and was found upon Saturday the 23d. instant, and buried at Londonderry on Monday the 25th about three o'clock in the afternoon. At the time of his decease, Alexander MacMurphy owned several pieces of real estate: his homestead of 50 acres in the easterly part of the town, a second division of one hundred and ten acres, about three miles westward of the homestead, a part ownership of two pieces of land with his brother, John MacMurphy, and with the Rev. Samuel Phillips, a third division of land on the east side of the Merrimack River at Amoskeag Falls, and two small meadows.

About 1856, Col. C. E. Potter published a valuable History of Manchester of over 850 pages from which the following para-

graph was taken: "The emigrants from Londonderry settled in various parts of the town wherever were found eligible locations: thus John Ridell settled upon what is called the Ray farm, Alexander MacMurphy, Jr., lived next above McNeill, opposite the Amoskeag falls bridge, his farm being between McNeill and Ridell, Archibald Stark settled upon what is now known as the Stark place. There was another Alexander MacMurphy who lived on the farm at the outlet of the Massabesic at that time. The Londonderry records show conclusively, that some occupation of land on the east side of the Merrimack River was already begun as early as 1726, and third divisions of land were laid out there. The region of the Amoskeag Falls was famous and profitable as fishing ground, and temporary buildings were erected before any thought was given to cultivation of adjacent land and permanent settlements. These facts are given to indicate the probable surroundings of James MacMurphy in his childhood, and that his education must have been only of the simplest and most practical kind.

As a young Man.

There is evidence, that soon after the death of the father, Alexander MacMurphy, in 1734, the widow, Jenet MacMurphy, received papers of appointment as administratrix of his estate, and declined to serve on the ground of inexperience in legal forms, and asked that the brother John MacMurphy, be given the appointment in her stead. It appears evident, that the real estate remained undivided, and lying in common to all, the heirs, until the children were grown up, and of age to act for themselves and to take legal possession.

Originally the homestead of Alexander MacMurphy, the father, was laid out in part to James Liggett, his wife's father or perhaps brother. September 1st, 1722 James Liggett, "for divers good causes," conveyed his part of the homestead to Alexander MacMurphy. The witnesses were George Phillips and Joseph Arthur. The deed was acknowledged at Portsmouth November 30, 1725, before James McKeen, Justice of the Peace.

No record has been found of the disposition of George MacMurphy's part of his father's estate; but such conveyance is

inferred by later transactions. Next to George, came John MacMurphy, who is clearly shown to have been a ship-right and died in Boston. For November 28, 1757, Alexander MacMurphy of Londonderry, yoeman, Administrator of the estate of John MacMurphy of Boston, shipright, deceased; in consideration of 140 pounds, old tenor, deeded to James MacMurphy of Londonderry, one third of all the lands in Londonderry, that his Honored Father, Alexander MacMurphy died possessed of. This shows that John MacMurphy had the share of George MacMurphy. With his own share at that time, James MacMurphy had one half of all his deceased fathers real estate.

January 8th, 1755 Daniel MacMurphy of Londonderry, yoeman, for 370 lbs, deeded to Alexander MacMurphy, all right, title or interest he had in the real estate of his Honored Father, Alexander MacMurphy; and makes particular mention of a tract of land lying by and near Amoskeag Falls.

March 18, 1750, Jean MacMurphy of Londonderry, spinster, in consideration of 140 lbs. deeded to Alexander MacMurphy her brother, all her rights, title and interest

to the estate of her Honored Father, Alexander MacMurphy. At the date of November 29th, 1757, James MacMurphy, owning one half of the several pieces of real estate, and Alexander MacMurphy, his brother, owning the other half; James MacMurphy of Londonderry, yoeman, for 450 lbs. conveyed to Alexander MacMurphy his half of these several tracts of land of his Honored Father. So we find, at this date, James MacMurphy had sold out his inherited real estate and was unmarried. This last deed shows that his brother, Alexander MacMurphy, was living on the original homestead, of fifty acres in the easterly part of the town, when the last deed was executed, sealed and delivered. In this manner we have been able to trace the early steps of the subject of this paper to the end of the year 1757, when he was twenty-four years of age without any family responsibilities or particular attachment to prevent his enlisting in the regular or colonial militia then considered a prudential measure of public safety..

Military Career.

Traditionally, it has been fairly represented, that the character and disposition of

James MacMurphy made it possible to think of him as always friendly to the royalists even after the beginning of the war of the revolution. In somewhat, he maintained his friendships under trying circumstances, without forgetting his citizenship. It must be remembered, that often in the general struggle for independence, households were divided, and brothers espoused opposite sides in desperate undertakings. There were impelling circumstances, in the formation of this man's character and temperament. His father lived next to one of the many farms of the Lt. Governor. The very charter of the town of Londonderry was obtained by a royal decree from King George the First. All through the years of his growing, from childhood to manhood, he had known of the colonial government, and came to understand the breaking out of Hostilities, between the British and French involved in this vicinity a great terror to the settlers, by the introduction of the Indian auxiliary to the side of the French. In the year 1758 the British made an effort to cripple the power of the French in this country with the help of the young men of the colonies, who were willing to enlist in the ser-

vice. Every history of the United States contains an account of the expeditions made by the English troops and regiments largely made up from the settlements of New Hampshire, marching through a wilderness to undertake the reduction of important forts at Ticonderoga, Crown Point, Louisburg and fort du Quesne. It may well be claimed, that the Rangers and Militia of New Hampshire were important elements in the success of those undertakings. At that early day the enlisting of so many men of Londonderry in the expeditions, against those fortified places, the hardship of Indian warfare, and the small recompense of wages are interesting facts, well worth considering in the review of any military career.

While a regiment was forming under Col. John Hart of or in Portsmouth, Lieut. Col. John Goffe, Sen., and 1st Lieut. John Goffe Jr., were busy in enlisting men for that regiment, and Capt. Alexander Todd of Londonderry enlisted for that regiment and commanded a company from this vicinity. The names of the officers and privates are duly preserved, and are very familiar names, even after more than a hundred

and fifty seven years. In this registration of the Londonderry company was the name of James MacMurphy, Sergeant. This was the subject of our sketch. In that same company was James Liggett of Londonderry, the same person who was granted a homestead with Alexander MacMurphy in the charter of the town. The troops from this vicinity started about the end of June 1758. They joined other troops to the number of eight regiments, gathered at Fort William Henry, at the foot of Lake Champlain, or moves nearly Lake St. George about the 5th of July 1758. Capt. John Stark and his companions of Rangers were on this expedition and Major Robert Rogers. Both these officers as well as the Goffes may be claimed for the honor of Londonderry. These expeditions were most successful and in a few days the English troops had taken the forts with the exception of fort Ticonderoga. In respect to officers of the provincial regiments taking full command, and being recognized; there was little difference between them and the corresponding officers of the regular army. "There were six hundred Rangers dressed like woodmen, armed with a firelock and a

hatchet; under their right arm a powder-horn; a leather bag for bullets at their waist; and to each officer a pocket compass as a guide in the forests." On that 5th day of July 1758, there were 15000 men, including both soldiers of the regular army, and of the provincial army ready to take passage in boats over Lake George, and undertake the conquest of the French and Indian forces and reduce their fortifications.

Returning to the Farm.

At what date Sergt. James MacMurphy returned from service in the French and Indian war is only conjectured. This fact is clear, that October 1, 1761, he received by purchase, a deed of conveyance of the original homestead of Charter David Morrison of Londonderry. It was a farm of sixty acres and buildings thereon, and there he opened a country store, for the sale of all general merchandise of that period. That farm has remained in the family name one hundred and fifty-four years, and has seen six generations.

There James MacMurphy took to himself a wife when above thirty years of age. He married Mary Wilson of Londonderry.

daughter of Nathaniel Wilson and Mary Liggett. The sixty acres did not include the meadows, and so the deed called for 336 rods in length, and 33 1-2 in width. The same day 30 acres adjoining this farm were deeded to William Duncan. Now William Duncan's brother John Duncan had married Hannah Henry; and both these deeds were signed by Margaret Morrison who was Margaret Henry before marriage to Charter Samuel Morrison. Again it may be noted, that William Duncan had married Jane Alexander, and another signer of the deeds was Elizabeth Morrison, who was Elizabeth Alexander before marriage to Abram Morrison. The consideration in sale of the 60 acre farm was 2602 pounds., and for the 30 acre farm was 234-4s pounds. March 14, 1767 Abram Morrison and wife Elizabeth conveyed the original charter Samuel Morrison home lot of 60 acres, and the original charter Abram Holmes homestead lot 60 acres, to James MacMurphy in Londonderry. That made James MacMurphy the owner of three original home lots adjoining each other, with three sets of buildings, in all one hundred and eighty acres, exclusive of meadows. These three

farms have ever since remained in the family and in the same line of descents.

In 1757, when James MacMurphy and all the other heirs, had quitclaimed to Alexander MacMurphy, all their rights, titles and interests in their Honored Father's estate; it left Alexander MacMurphy in possession of the original homelot of 50 acres, the second division of 110 acres, the two lots with Rev. Samuel Phillips and Squire John MacMurphy and the farm at Amoskeag Falls. Alexander MacMurphy married and had children, made a will and died in 1763. James MacMurphy, was trustee for his deceased brother's minor children.

November 22nd, 1769 Isabella MacMurphy, widow of Alexander MacMurphy and executrix of the will and testament, for 150 lbs. paid by John Craige of Chester, and James MacMurphy of Londonderry; sold and deeded to them the 50 acres original homestead, the meadow, the James Liggett division and two other lots on Chester line. Witnesses: Robert MacMurphy and Mathew Thornton, the latter taking her acknowledgement the same day, as Justice of the Peace. John Craige was brother to the widow of

Alexander MacMurphy. Isabella Craigie was the daughter of William and Jean Craige of Chester. James MacMurphy joined with the widow in sale of the 110 acre lot to Samuel Wilson, also the quarter of a sawmill lot, and other land of Alexander MacMurphy. James MacMurphy, and wife Mary MacMurphy, and the widow Isabella MacMurphy, signed the deed of conveyance on the 4th of February, 1766. Witnesses: Jean Holland, Stephen Holland, John Bell, acknowledgement the same day before Stephen Holland, Justice of the Peace. Evidently James MacMurphy was prosperous, either from the profits of his farms, or from the profits of his store, with the cultivation of thrifty habits.

Concerning His Family.

The date of James MacMurphy's marriage to Mary Wilson is not known; but it is evident from the signing of the conveyance to Samuel Wilson by both of them February 4, 1766, that they were married before that transaction. Town records of vital statistics are often found to be very incomplete; and many explanations are given to account for the absence of any

mention of very well authenticated marriage, births, deaths, etc. In this instance family traditions has furnished a very good record of the births of eight children to this worthy couple. These eight children were all born on the charter David Morrison farm that was purchased by James MacMurphy October 1, 1761 for 2602 lbs. The price is repeated here in order to recall the great depreciation in value of money, current at that particular period of colonial history. These are the names and dates of birth of the eight children:

Jane MacMurphy, born October 1, 1768.
Alexander MacMurphy, born March 21, 1768; Jenny MacMurphy, born April 24, 1770; Peggy MacMurphy, born November 11, 1772; Mary MacMurphy, born April 4, 1775; Betsey MacMurphy, born July 31, 1777; Benjamin MacMurphy, born April 30, 1779; Alice MacMurphy, born July 31, 1781. In the spring of 1776 it was deemed necessary to ascertain whether the male citizens of the town were all disposed to support the patriots of the revolution, or be classed with the party of the royalists. In the matter of signing this association test, those who would not sign were com-

elled to move away and their estates were sold and confiscated to the use of the town. James MacMurphy's name appears among the signors. He was not called upon to join the army, although experienced in the years of service as sergeant in the French and Indian wars. Naturally from service in the provincial troops, along with the regular army, he still had royal sympathies; but was too heavily loaded with the responsibilities of family, store and farming, to be easily induced to flee away to Nova Scotia. About the time half a dozen children began to require more attention and room, James MacMurphy undertook the building of a new house. He succeeded in building a new house, but the cost of labor and material much exceeded his calculations; so that he was obliged to alter his original plan for a large two story house, with street door and hall through the middle, and be contented with a simple front, just as the same house appears today.

The lives of James and Mary MacMurphy sum at this distance to have been particularly happy and satisfactory. There was no bad break in the record of eight births in about twice as many years. And the chil-

then were all strong and healthy, and doubtless a great comfort to their parents. Another remarkable fact about these sons and daughters was that every one of them lived a long way into the next century. Six out of the eight in time married and raised other families. But none of them married or went away from that home during the lifetime of the father. The event of his death was expected and anticipated in several important movements. He had this event in mind when he disposed of most of his real estate. His own plans were farther laid down in his last will and testament, having always the good of his family in view.

His Last Years.

As previously stated, James MacMurphy was the owner of three original homelots each sixty acres or more. When the time came for him to make some disposition of his estate, he made provision for his son Alexander MacMurphy, just come of age to act for himself, in this manner:

October 30, 1789 James MacMurphy and Mary his wife joined in conveying to their son, Alexander MacMurphy, for 30 lbs. the

Charter Abram Holmes lot; witnesses, Abram Duncan and James Betton; the latter took acknowledgment as Justice of the Peace the same day. None of the eight children were married, and only two were of age.

May 16, 1792, James and Mary Wilson MacMurphy made another conveyance, deeding to their son, Alexander MacMurphy, for 30 lbs. the Charter Samuel Morrison home lot; witnesses: John Bell, William Wilson. The acknowledgment was before John Bell, Justice of the Peace, May 16th. 1792.

The same day, Alexander MacMurphy signed a discharge of all claims on his father's estate, and acknowledged that he had received his full share, in the presence of the same men who witnessed the deed.

This left James MacMurphy in possession of the Charter David Morrison home lot only, and the final disposition of that was made in a last will and testament, as will be shown presently. His strength was failing, although not an old man. The day of departure was certainly not far off; for he had a chronic affection of the kidneys and strangulation of the water passage.

Like his brother Alexender MacMurphy, who was near death in weakness of body but soundness of mind, in 1763, made provision for the settlement of his estate; so James MacMurphy desired to make all the arrangements for the distribution of his earthly possessions, and know that his beloved wife and her eight children would be provided for.

His Last Will and Testament.

In the name of God, amen, I James MacMurphy of Londonderry in the County of Rockingham and State of New Hampshire, yeoman, being much indisposed in body but in sound mind and memory, thanks, be given to God therefor, calling to mind the mortality of my body and that it is appointed for all men once to die, do make and ordain this my last will and testament, that is to say principally, and first of all, I give and recommend my soul into the hands of God, that gave it, and my body I recommend to the earth to be buried in decent Christian burial at the discretion of my executors, nothing doubting but at the general resurrection I shall receive the same again by the mighty power of God;

and as touching such worldly estate wherewith it hath pleased God to bless me in his world with, I give, devise and dispose of the same in the following manner and form:

IMPRIMIS, my will is that all my just debts and funeral charges may be paid by my executors with all suitable dispatch and as soon as convenience will admit.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my beloved wife Mary MacMurphy the improvement of the third of all my real estate, together with the third part of my buildings during her natural life.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my son Alexander MacMurphy six shillings with what he hath already received.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my son Benjamin MacMurphy the lot of land I now live upon containing about sixty acres, b- it more or less together with the buildings that are upon the same, and all my farming utensils, and all my stock of rattle, saving one cow which I leave to my wife, and the use of my horse when she pleases to call for it, he paying the legacies hereafter mentioned.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my daughter Jane MacMurphy, six pounds to be paid to her by my son Benjamin MacMurphy when he arrives at the age of twenty-one years.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my daughter Jenette MacMurphy six pounds to be paid to her by my son Benjamin when he becomes of the age of twenty-one years.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my daughter Peggy MacMurphy six pounds to be paid to her by my son Benjamin when he arrives at the age of twenty-one years.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my daughter Mary MacMurphy six pounds to be paid to her by my son Benjamin when he arrives at the age of twenty two years.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my daughter Elizabeth MacMurphy six pounds to be paid to her by my son Benjamin when he comes to the age of twenty-three years.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my daughter Elis MacMurphy six pounds to be paid to her by my son Benjamin when he arrives at the age of twenty four years.

ITEM: My will is that my executors sell the land that lies to the west of what land I sold to Benjamin Fish, which is not men-

tioned in my will, and pay my just debts therewith and if any remains, that is to be applied to paying the legacies fore-going as far as it will go.

AND I do nominate my wife, Mary MacMurphy, and my son, Alexander MacMurphy, executors of this my last will and testament, and all and singular goods and chattels, satisfying and confirming this and no other to be my last will and testament, utterly revoke and disannul all former wills, legacies, and bequeathments whatsoever.

IN witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the sixteenth day of May Anno Domini 1792.

Signed, sealed, published pronounced and declared by me the aforesaid James MacMurphy as my last will and testament in the presence of these witnesses:

JOHN BELL,

WILLIAM WILSON,

JANE—MACMURPHY,

JAMES MACMURPHY.

SEAL

Will proved August 15, 1792.

That was a busy day for Squire John Bell, and the business was urgent.

There is not much more to be said of Sergt. James MacMurphy, he died two weeks later, May 30, 1792, and was buried in the old graveyard near the first church. His widow was kindly cared for by her son Benjamin MacMurphy, in the same house and in the manner prescribed by her late husbands wishes. There Mary Wilson MacMurphy died in full possession of all her faculties, May 10, 1818, and was buried beside her husband: A single stone and inscription marks their graves.

